

REMARKS

Applicants submit this Reply in response to the non-final Office Action mailed September 21, 2010. Claims 36-70 are present in the application. Of those claims, claims 44-68 have been withdrawn from consideration as being directed to non-elected subject matter. Thus, claims 36-43, 69, and 70 are pending on the merits, of which claims 36 and 69 are independent. By this Reply, Applicants have amended claims 36 and 69. Support for these amendments can be found in Applicants' specification, at least at page 10, line 18-page 11, line 17, and Figures 3, 3a, and 3b. No new matter has been added.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 36, 38-40, and 43 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP-05031724 ("Hashimoto") in view of JP-03202326 ("Masuda"), and further in view of EP-0209453 ("Faure-Bondat"); rejected claim 37 under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hashimoto, Masuda, and Faure-Bondat, and further in view of Applicants' alleged admission of prior art; rejected claims 41 and 42 under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hashimoto, Masuda, and Faure-Bondat, and further in view of U.S. Patent App. Pub. No. 2003/0122284 ("Mori"); and rejected claims 69 and 70 under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hashimoto, Masuda, and Faure-Bondat, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,464,090 ("Cantarutti") and U.S. Patent No. 5,939,002 ("Heindel").

Applicants respectfully traverse all pending rejections for at least the reasons discussed below.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Applying 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), the Examiner rejected claims 36-43, 69, and 70 as set forth above. However, a *prima facie* case of obviousness, the requirements of which are discussed below, has not been established for each rejected claim.

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must disclose all of the claim limitations, or the claim rejection must explain why the differences between the prior art and the claim limitations would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art. See M.P.E.P. § 2141.

A *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established because, among other things, Hashimoto, Masuda, Faure-Bondat, Mori, Cantarutti, Heindel, and Applicants' admitted prior art, alone or in any combination, fail to teach or render obvious every feature of Applicants' amended claims. For example, amended independent claim 36 recites an expandable bladder, including, in part:

a continuous strip-like element extending around a geometric axis of the bladder according to circumferential coils in side by side relationship, the continuous strip-like element comprising:

at least one first layer of a first elastomer material and one second layer of a second elastomer material different from said first elastomer material; . . .

wherein said first and second layers are mutually coupled along their longitudinal extension and have an undulated interface profile.

Amended independent claim 69, although of different scope, recites similar features.

Nowhere does any reference cited by the Examiner disclose winding "a continuous strip-like element . . . according to circumferential coils in side by side relationship," let alone "a continuous strip-like element . . . according to circumferential

coils in side by side relationship, the continuous strip-like element comprising: at least one first layer . . . and one second layer[.] wherein said first and second layers are mutually coupled along their longitudinal extension and have an undulated interface profile."

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejections of amended independent claims 36 and 69 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Hashimoto, Masuda, Faure-Bondat, Mori, Cantarutti, Heindel, and Applicants' allegedly admitted prior art. Moreover, claims 37-43 and 70 each depend from one of independent claims 36 and 69, and thus, they contain all the elements and limitations thereof. Accordingly, Applicants also request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the § 103(a) rejections of dependent claims 37-43 and 70, as they are allowable at least due to their corresponding dependence from one of independent claims 36 and 69.

Claim Scope

It is to be understood that Applicants are in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to any exemplary embodiments described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicants believe that they are entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

If the Examiner believes that a telephone conversation might advance prosecution of this application, the Examiner is cordially invited to call Applicants' undersigned attorney at (404) 653-6435.

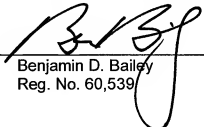
Applicants respectfully note that the Office Action contains a number of assertions concerning the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether those assertions are addressed specifically herein, Applicants respectfully decline to automatically subscribe to them.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW,
GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.

Dated: March 16, 2011

By: 
Benjamin D. Bailey
Reg. No. 60,539